

U.S. News & World Report

# AFTERMATH OF THE U-2— THE ARGUMENT GOES ON

Findings of Investigating Committee ... Views of Individual Senators

Was the President right or wrong in his handling of U-2 flights over Russia?

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee spent days delving into that question after the collapse of the Paris "summit" conference.

Now the Committee's findings are public—but the issue is far from settled.

The following excerpts are from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee report on the U-2 flights over Russia. The report was made public on June 25, 1960.

Let it be said at the outset that the gathering of intelligence with respect to foreign activities potentially important to our security and that of the free world is fully justified by precedent as well as by vital necessity. Since time immemorial, nations have found it necessary to engage in such activities of both the overt and covert variety. The Soviet Union itself has probably engaged in covert intelligence activities on a wider scale than any other nation in the history of the world. What the Committee is concerned with respecting the U-2 program is not the propriety, desirability or necessity of such operations, but the lessons, if any, which can be drawn from the failure of the May 1 flight and related events.

On the basis of classified testimony which cannot be disclosed, the Committee has no reason to believe that technical preparations for the flight were faulty or that the pilot was culpable in any respect. From the technical point of view, the preparation and equipment of plane and pilot—and hence the U-2 on May 1—was just plain bad luck.

There remains the question of the wisdom of sending the aircraft at all. The Committee was told that the flight was after reconnaissance of well above average importance, but it was not clear what this information was. The Committee cannot conclude from the information available as to whether the importance of the information sought justified the risks which were taken. Although the Committee recognizes the necessity for intelligence operations, it is strongly of the opinion that the government based upon a separation of powers cannot justify its actions. It is disappointed that the responsible officials of the executive branch did not see fit to confide in it this piece of information which is crucial to reaching an informed judgment. The Committee recognizes that the Administration has the legal right to refuse the information requested on the basis of executive privilege.

To help you understand the argument—  
Pertinent passages of the Committee report are presented on these pages.

Also included are the separate views of three Committee members, plus a speech by Chairman Fulbright of Arkansas and a reply by Senator Wiley of Wisconsin.

In view of the Russian psychopathic addiction to secrecy, which has characterized the Russian Government, a probing of this secret, such as that involved in the U-2 operations, coupled with the frustrations and chagrin of the Soviets over a period of almost four years, could only have been expected to result in the most violent reaction when this penetration of their territory was made public.

In view of the combination of circumstances surrounding the loss of the U-2 on May 1, the next question which arises concerning the reaction of the U. S. Government. The first conclusion on this point is that the cover story, which had been designed in advance to meet such a contingency, was inadequate for the circumstances which in fact existed. The cover story which was used in regard to the U-2 for the period May 1 to 7 might have served its purpose if the plane had come down under different circumstances. Until May 7, it was not known in Washington where the U-2 had come down. The plane's flight plan was known, however, and it would have been a reasonable assumption that the chances were quite good that the plane was nowhere near the Soviet border.

At any rate, the cover story was quite obviously out-flanked on May 7, and the responsible officials felt that it was then necessary to discuss the matter in greater detail. It was admitted that the U-2 was on a reconnaissance mission, but it was denied that the mission had been authorized from Washington.

In Khrushchev's early statements about the plane, he had implied doubt that President Eisenhower knew about the operation. The May 7 statement of the State Department seemed to confirm this doubt. However, on May 9 Secretary Herter said the program of flights—though not specific flights as such—had been authorized by the President. The substance of this statement was repeated by the President himself May 11.

The course which the President took is unprecedented in intelligence operations, so far as the Committee knows on the record discloses. It is known that Allen Dulles [Director of the Central Intelligence Agency] was prepared to accept the full responsibility himself, which is the traditional procedure under the circumstances.

The Committee feels that perhaps too much emphasis has